



blm - alaska

frontiers

managing public lands for multiple use

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BLM's new Director, Jim Baca, answers questions about land management issues

I N S I D E

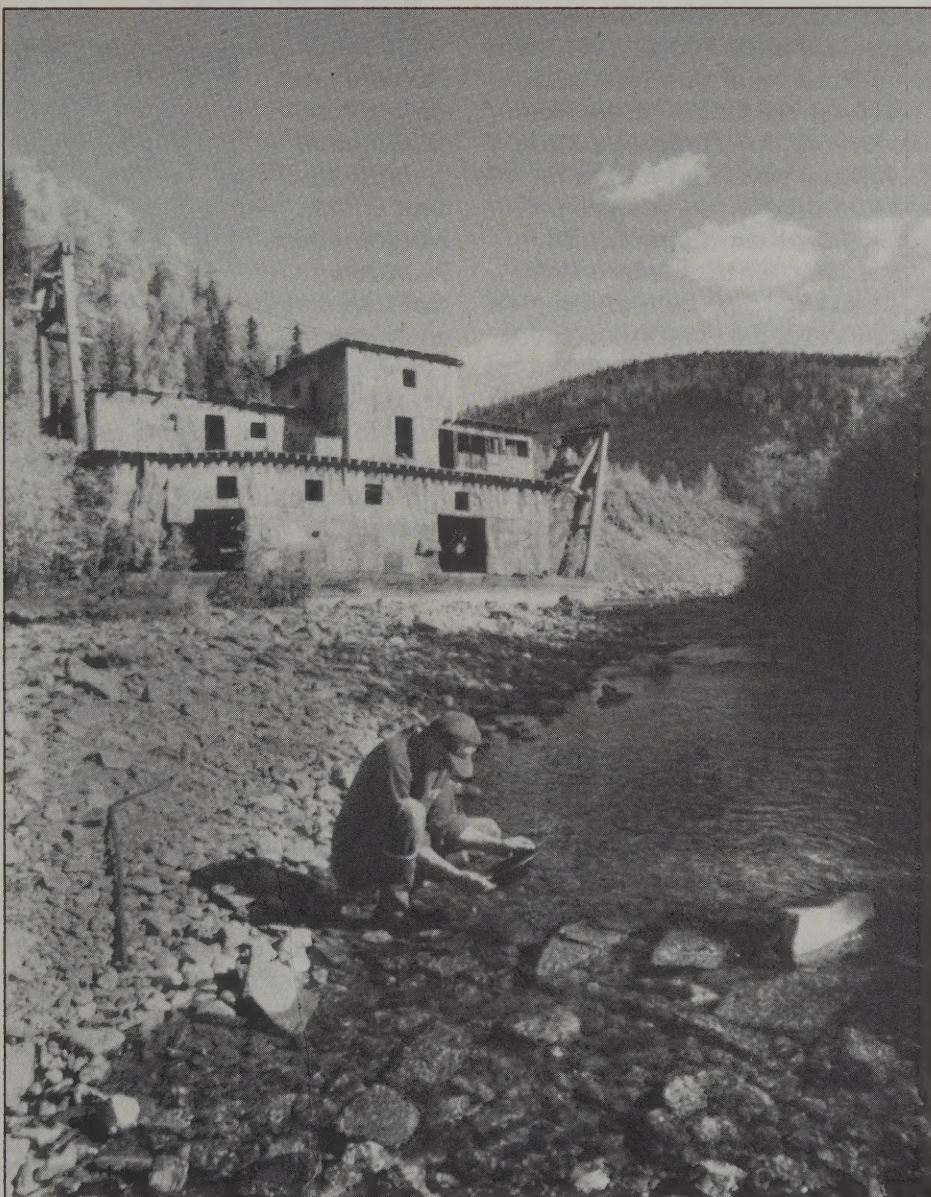
Satellite telephone
comes to the rescue in
Taylor Highway crash

Midwest couple signs up
as campground hosts

Northern Alaska
Advisory Council visits
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Hot, dry weather and
lightning spark longer fire
season for Interior

The Unalakleet River—
plenty of fish, bears and
scenery



Ed Boy

Goldpanning off the Taylor Highway—autumn colors, crisp air and a chance to strike gold brings a hopeful panner to the Interior. Recently, the highway was the scene of a rescue aided by the use of a new satellite telephone provided by BLM's Alaska Fire Service at the field station in Chicken.

New BLM Director answers questions about land management issues

Jim Baca, BLM's new Director, wants to learn all he can about the concerns BLM faces before he adopts new policy positions.

Prior to his confirmation, Baca, who is an Air Force veteran and business graduate of the University of New Mexico, was serving his second four-year term as New Mexico's Commissioner of Public Lands. He administered the second largest land office in the West—over 13 million acres of state trust lands.

Baca said he did his best as New Mexico land commissioner to strike the necessary balance between the sometimes conflicting positions of development and environmental protection. "We tried to be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things, and at the same time respect the old traditions," he said. "Compromise" has never been a bad word in his vocabulary. "No one is going to get everything they want, but perhaps all of us can see our values reflected in the outcomes."

During his confirmation hearing before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Director Baca answered questions about land management issues.

Q. How do you view non-federal lands (adjacent state and private lands) in terms of your management of the federal estate?



A. Uses of adjoining lands often influence and are influenced by management of BLM lands. I place high importance on coordinating land uses with adjoining land-owners, whether the lands are in private ownership or are owned by other government entities.

Q. Are there uses of the federal

lands which you think should either be discouraged or phased out?

A. I believe that uses which are not...in compliance with legal and environmental requirements should be discontinued on federal lands. Trespassing, illegal dumping, and similar uses should not be allowed to continue on public lands.

Q. What can we expect during the "Baca years?"

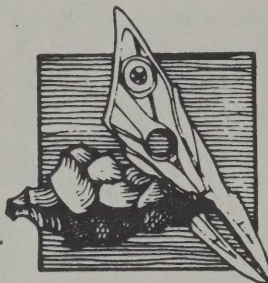
A. President Clinton has given clear instructions that laws must be followed and that environmental and taxpayer protection be given a high priority. [We] need to look to the future, to address changes that are needed to give greater recognition to fish, wildlife, recreation, cultural heritage, and other similar responsibilities of the BLM.

Q. You've mentioned that you want to help change BLM's image? What's wrong with BLM's image today?

A. BLM is capable of managing its lands for a variety of purposes, including recreation and wildlife habitat. Rather than being seen only as a manager of commodity-based programs, it is my hope that BLM will become increasingly recognized for its expertise in other areas.

Q. How do you envision the role of the public in BLM's decision-making process?

A. The lands and resources that BLM manages belong to the public. I'll ensure they have access at appropriate points in the process. I've always managed with an open-door style and I encourage public involvement.



Q. Should the federal government make habitat acquisition a top priority for protection of endangered species?

A. Section 5 of the Endangered Species Act requires the Interior Department to consider and utilize certain land acquisition authorities [when appropriate] as part of an overall program to conserve fish, wildlife, and plants, including those which are or may not be listed as threatened or endangered. Maximum protection of the environment should be one of the highest priorities. Generally, habitat protection should have priority over habitat acquisition. Financial compensation needs to be developed to promote habitat protection on State and private lands. Acquisition may be necessary if no other alternatives exist. I favor exchange over purchase.

Q. Do you support changes in the mining law?

A. I believe changes in the Mining Law of 1872 are long overdue. I believe the most pressing reform issues are the provision of a fair market return for the use of federal resources and environmental protection.

Q. Do you support a severance tax for minerals on private land or from pre-existing development?



A. I don't support a severance tax or retroactive royalty for minerals that have already been mined. We may want to consider reducing proposed royalty rates [for federal minerals] and levying a severance tax.

Q. Senator Craig (R-ID) recently introduced a bill for a limited

reform of the 1872 Mining Law. Rather than \$2.50 or \$5.00 an acre, mining companies would have to pay an amount equal to the fair market value of the land (but not the minerals) to be acquired pursuant to a patent.

Do you think the American taxpayer would be receiving a fair return if public land containing billions of dollars worth of hard-rock minerals were sold to private companies for \$100 an acre?

A. No. Although at one time [the ability to patent mining claims] was a useful tool to foster settlement of the West, it no longer serves any useful purpose and should be discontinued.

Q. Do you support a royalty on hardrock mining?

A. I support a royalty on hardrock mining because I believe the federal government and the taxpayer are due a fair return from the use of public resources. I will not support any royalty provisions which I believe would send our mineral industry out of the United States.

Q. Do you believe that the sale of public land under the patenting system of the 1872 Mining Law is appropriate in light of FLPMA (Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976) policies opposing the disposition of public land?

A. No. The very first sentence of FLPMA states that it's the policy of the United States for the public land to be retained in federal ownership, unless as a result of land use planning, it is determined that disposal of a particular parcel will serve the national interest.

It's hard for me to reconcile the patenting provisions of the 1872 Mining Law with this fundamental policy statement.

Q. Section 101 (d) of ANILCA provides for balance between wilderness and resource

use in Alaska. It also states that "Congress believes that the need for future legislation designating new conservation system units, new national conservation areas, or new national recreation areas, has been obviated..." Will you follow this section of ANILCA?

A. As the Director of the BLM, I will follow the laws applicable to BLM activities. If, as a result of its normal activities, the BLM recognizes a unique or special situation which might justify the creation of a new conservation system unit in Alaska, we would work closely with the State and other affected interests and bring that situation to Congress' attention before making any major decision.

Q. Will you conduct wilderness review of Alaska's BLM land and report on wilderness suitability to Congress?

A. As specified in Section 1320 of ANILCA, public lands administered by BLM in Alaska were exempted from the wilderness review program for BLM lands outside of Alaska under the requirements of Section 603 of FLPMA. Wilderness reviews of BLM lands in Alaska will be conducted as part of the regular land use planning process and procedures specified in Sections 201 and 202 of FLPMA. At the present time, Secretary Babbitt is evaluating the March 12, 1981, memorandum of

former Secretary Watt to the BLM, which directed that any further wilderness considerations were not to be undertaken by BLM.

Q. Will you oppose the creation of any new Conservation System Units in Alaska on BLM lands?

A. No. Where such lands meet the requirements of applicable law and are in the public interest, we will support their designation.

Q. Do you believe that wilderness areas or restrictive conservation designations should be established to block access to resources?

A. No. Use of such designations for the sole purpose of blocking access would clearly be a violation of the basic authorizing legislation for such areas. As specified in ANILCA, access is required to be granted through Conservation System Units by the Federal Government under applicable provisions of law and regulations to other affected landowners.

Q. Do you recognize the importance of BLM lands for multiple use in Alaska?

A. Yes. BLM lands have significant potential to provide economic benefits for the citizens of Alaska and the rest of the United States. The BLM will continue to manage these lands with the goal of providing opportunities for the development of the natural resources where such development can be conducted in a manner that does not result in unacceptable environmental consequences and provides Americans a fair return for the developed resources.



Quick thinking and BLM's new phone saves life

When disaster strikes in the wee hours of the morning, and you're 80 miles from the nearest community on a winding gravel road, who are you going to call?

In the remote area of Chicken, Alaska, the usual answer is—no one. Chicken has no phone system.

However, this summer when two visitors from Mississippi needed critical emergency first aid, a special satellite telephone was available at the BLM's Alaska Fire Service field station in Chicken. That phone probably saved their lives.

On July 1, Jeff Roach, summer seasonal employee for the BLM in the Fortymile area, was awakened at 6 a.m. "Jeff Jacobs, a Student Conservation Association volunteer, and I were sleeping soundly when we heard someone banging on the door. Terry Doyle, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Tok, had two young men around 20 years old, in his pickup and covered with blood."

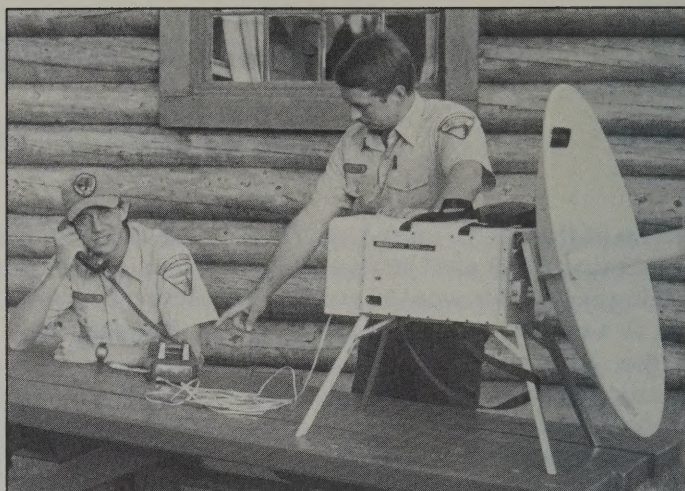
Their truck had gone over the edge of the Taylor Highway at Mile 72. They rolled down a 100-foot slope of jagged rocks and came to rest at the bottom, upside down in the creek. Crawling up out of the valley to the road, they were picked up by Terry Doyle, who was out working on a bird survey.

When they got to the field station, Doyle, Jacobs and Roach administered basic first aid to stop their bleeding, and took their vital signs. "We were all certified in standard first aid and CPR," Roach says. "We knew how to put pressure on their wounds, how to take their vital signs, and the basics of keeping them alive until professionals arrive."

Response time to an accident in the area is usually a minimum of four hours. One of the victims had severe head injuries, and was passing in and out of consciousness. The only communication at the field station in the past has been a radio link to the BLM office in Tok. At 6 a.m., there was no one in the office to answer the radio. No one else in the area monitors the radio.

Fortunately, the AFS had provided a Magnaphone satellite telephone system at the Chicken Field Station last spring, out of concern for employee safety and any emergencies. The phone can contact other telephones and can be used for emergencies in the Fortymile area.

Roach immediately set up the new satellite telephone. "It took me about two minutes. Then I waited for the



Holli McClaine

Jeff Jacobs and Jeff Roach with the Magnaphone satellite telephone system used in the rescue.

system to warm up, which usually takes up to 10 minutes. When the light panel lit up after about six minutes, I called the Alaska State Trooper office in Tok."

Dispatcher Sherry Vanderlinden was astonished to receive the call. "I think this is the first time we ever had an accident reported by telephone," she says. "They usually come over CB radio and you can hardly hear the details. This call was crystal clear."

Vanderlinden called the local nurse practitioner at home and relayed information about the victims. The nurse had an emergency medical technician call the trooper office, and Vanderlinden relayed information back and forth between Roach and the EMT.

"The EMT decided to send two aircraft to Chicken, with an emergency medical technician on each one. He decided the injuries were serious enough to transport the victims directly to Fairbanks," Roach said.

It took an hour for the airplanes to reach Chicken, which is 79 road miles from Tok. Roach met the EMTs at the airfield and drove them to the Chicken Field Station, a mile away.

"The EMTs stabilized the more seriously injured victim by putting a back board and neck brace on him," says Roach. "They hooked up an IV for loss of blood. Since he was vomiting blood, they feared he had internal injuries."

"The second victim was able to walk, so they put a sling on one arm and a turban bandage on his head. I drove everyone back to the aircraft in our pickup, and they flew directly to Fairbanks."

Troopers reported back to BLM that the victims had recovered well enough to travel after a few days, and had flown back to Mississippi to recuperate from their ordeal.

Roach says it gives him a feeling of security to have the satellite telephone in Chicken. "The Tok BLM office wouldn't have opened for two more hours, and if it had been over the weekend, there would have been no contact at all. Someone would have had to drive to Tok for help."

—Sharon Durgan Wilson

Lightning strikes extend fire season

An early spring with record warm temperatures and dry weather had Alaska firefighters battling blazes longer than planned this summer. Lightning strikes caused fires to flare up after the July 10 conversion date—the officially scheduled end of the 1993 fire season.

The conversion date is a traditional milestone in Alaska's fire season, when the worst of the fire season is usually over and fire fighting efforts wind down. Fires which previously would have been fought are now only monitored. Officials assess the potential threat to an area by a fire versus the cost of suppressing the fire.

The change typically means less activity for Alaska firefighters. "The threat of large wildfires usually

decreases after mid-July as changing weather patterns bring more moisture and cooler temperatures," says Don Berry, fire intelligence officer for the Alaska Interagency Fire Coordination Center. The AIFCC coordinates wildland fire suppression efforts by the BLM's Alaska Fire Service and the State of Alaska's Division of Forestry.

But instead of slowing down this year, new fires flared up around the state. As of July 10, 471 fires had burned 122,800 acres in Alaska. By August 5, when drenching rains finally signaled the end of the fire season, the number of fires had risen to 735 and more than 600,000 acres had burned.

Barry says the severity of fire years varies widely in Alaska. "In 1989, fires burned only 69,000 acres.

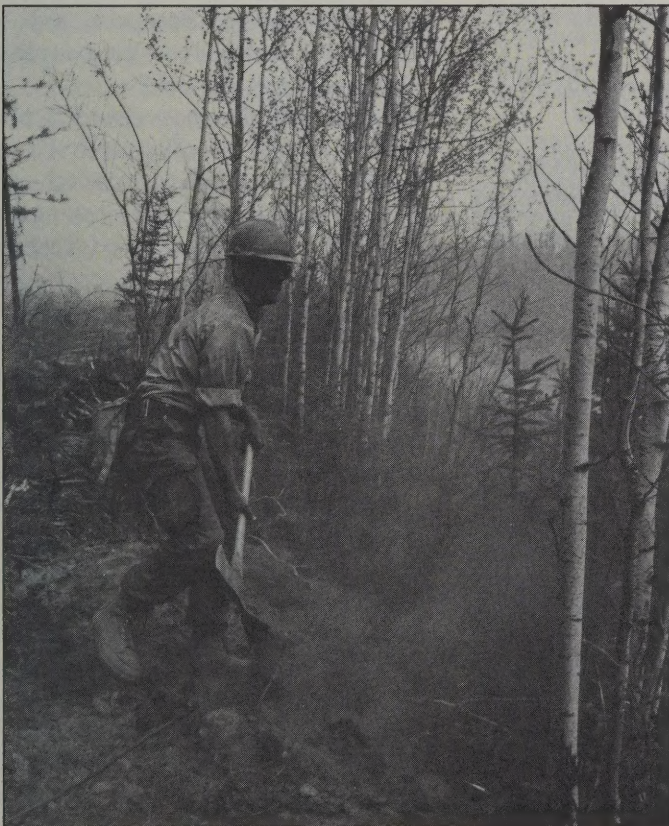
The following year, more than 3 million acres burned," he says. "The 10-year average for acreage burned is about 400,000."

Tom Dean, fire coordinator for the AIFCC, says the conversion date to determine the level of fire protection is in the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan, which is approved by various State, Federal and private land managing agencies. The date can be changed or canceled depending on the severity of the fire season.

The conversion does not apply to lands on the Seward Peninsula, the Kenai Peninsula or the Copper River area. Fires on lands in critical and full protection areas will continue to be attacked.

—Andy Williams

How hard do you fight? The four levels of fire suppression



Fighting fire in Interior Alaska. By the end of this summer's fire season, 735 fires had burned more than 600,000 acres.

Lands in Alaska are protected from wildfires under four management options:

Critical Protection Areas —

those areas where human life and property are at risk, such as around towns or villages. Fires in these areas take unquestioned priority over all other fires, and receive immediate and aggressive attention.

Full Protection Areas —

privately-owned, uninhabited lands or lands that contain valuable resources such as commercial timber or historic structures. Aggressive initial attack and suppression are used until the fire is declared out.

Modified Action Areas —

lands that require a higher level of fire protection during critical burning periods, but a lower level when the risk of large fires is reduced. Managers consider the value of resources at risk versus the cost of suppression.

Limited Action Areas —

remote lands where the cost of fire fighting exceeds the value of the resources present. Close monitoring is the only action taken as long as the fire remains confined in a limited action area and does not threaten to burn into a higher priority area.

Council visits Athabaskan village

Blueberries, a fish camp and a river boat tour add fun to advisory council's meeting with Stevens Village

As part of its continuing efforts to encourage discussion between BLM and people in rural communities, the Northern Alaska Advisory Council held a public meeting in Stevens Village during its annual field trip in July. The Advisory Council acts as a non-federal, neutral ear between the BLM and its constituents. During the council's March meeting in Fairbanks, Chief Randy Mayo had invited them to the village.

Council members visited with local residents of the Athabaskan Indian village, 27 miles upriver from the Yukon Crossing where the Dalton Highway crosses the Yukon River. They discussed land management problems faced by the villagers as the State's population increases and expands northward.

Following a potluck, residents of this remote and tiny village crowded the benches of the community hall to meet council members and BLM staffers.

The council listened attentively as young and old spoke of their concerns about the use of public

land traditionally used by the village's hunters. Potential pollution from a pipeline pump station near their fishing areas was mentioned, as well as the problems of maintaining a traditional culture while trying to raise their economic status.

Conversation flowed freely, and by the end of the meeting advisory council members, villagers and BLM staffers agreed that open and cooperative working relationships were needed to solve current problems. BLM also promised to work with Alyeska Pipeline Services Company to allow a Stevens Village delegation to visit Pump Station 6, and see station operations and emergency cleanup procedures.

Council Chair Walter Sampson told the village residents that the council and BLM want input from the community. "Land management plans need to be done from the bottom to the top," Sampson said, "and they must include the people who are being affected."

Afterward, the council and BLM staffers visited the village's first tourism venture. They boarded Dinyee Corporation's 49-passenger motor launch, *Yookene Spirit*, for the return trip to the Yukon Crossing. The corporation's business arm, Yukon River Tours, offers daily round trips on the *Yookene Spirit* from the Yukon Crossing to a traditional fish camp six miles upriver.

Villagers at the fish camp demonstrated how they fillet king salmon and hang the fish to smoke. They talked about the importance of the fish for consumption by villagers and by sled dogs. The smoke house was nearly full of late-summer kings, and small canvas tents showed what life is like in a traditional fish camp.

A small cultural museum features the life and times of Horace Smoke, Sr., a former chief of Stevens Village and well-known sled dog racer.



Sharon Durgan Wilson

King salmon are filleted and hung to smoke on a fish drying rack at a traditional fish camp operated by the Athabaskan Indians of Stevens Village.

Tools, clothing and dog sled equipment, handcrafted by people from Stevens Village and other communities along the Yukon, fill the museum.

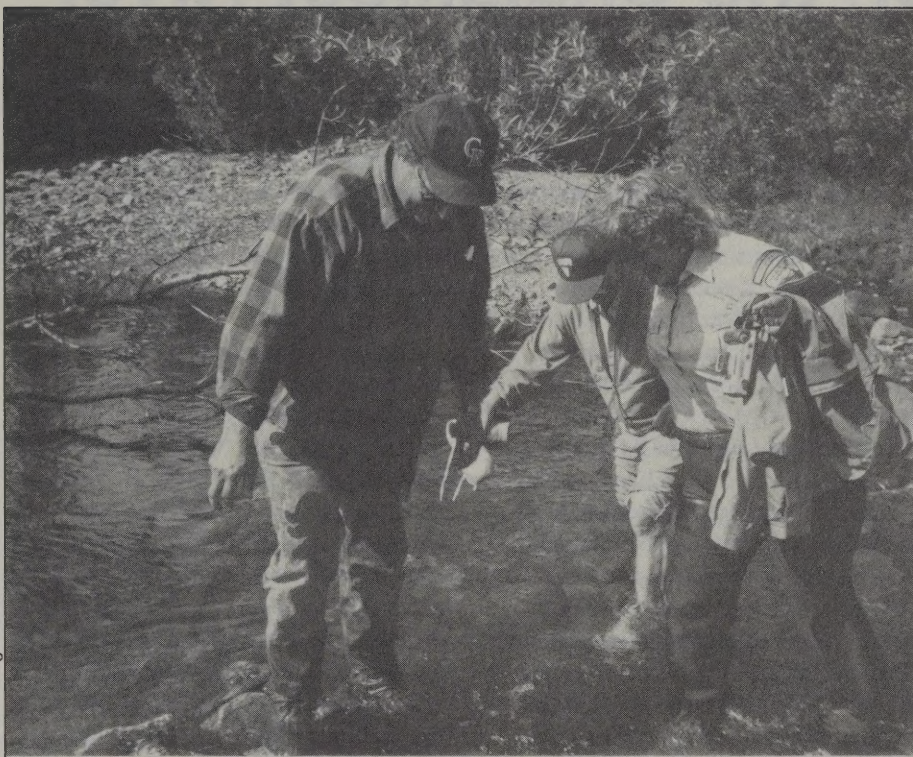
To complete their field trip, the council and BLM staff members flew to the Central Fire Station, where they were briefed on fire activity and the general operation of the station. The president of the Circle Mining District and a State Department of Environmental Conservation representative discussed experimental methods used to reclaim abandoned Federal mining claims the council would visit.

From Central, the council drove down the Steese Highway, visiting the reclamation sites and getting a briefing on projects being planned by the BLM's Steese/White Mountains District. These projects were identified originally for the area set aside by Congress for the spillover of people from Fairbanks' crowded public recreation areas.

The council stopped at places where interpretive sites are planned for the Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail and the Davidson Ditch, and at the put-in and take-out points on the increasingly popular Birch Creek National Wild River.

At the gateway to the White Mountains National Recreation Area, 60 road miles northeast of Fairbanks, the council viewed BLM's recontouring of a tailings area by Nome Creek left by previous mining operations. The group also examined small willow trees about five inches high that sprouted from willow stems planted by BLM volunteers last year. Eventually, the trees will stabilize the gravel areas along the stream.

After hiking to a blueberry-covered meadow, council members discussed the need for the proposed Nome Creek road and a small campground at the end of the road. The road will provide access to the White Mountains National Recreation Area, the Beaver Creek National Wild River and several trailheads. The campground will help BLM to contain (and possibly reduce) the impact of campers who are already using this remote area as recreation territory.



Sharon Durgan Wilson

Council members waded through Nome Creek. During the reclamation of the Nome Creek valley, the tailings—hills of barren rock left by long-ago gold dredges—will be moved and flattened to shape the valley. Eventually, the sides of the valley will slope down to Nome Creek, and the creek's meandering channels will merge to form a single, viable stream with improved habitat for fish.



Shelly Jones

Ron Brooks, representing the public at large on the Northern Alaska Advisory Council, discusses the layout of a small campground proposed at the east end of the future Nome Creek Road.

—Sharon Durgan Wilson

Fishing's always good on the Unalakleet River

It was a perfect day for working—sunny, no bugs, and the silver salmon were running in the Unalakleet River. For Dave Kelley, natural resource specialist with the BLM's Anchorage District, it was like coming home. Kelley has spent many summers doing timber, fishing, hydrological and cultural studies on the Unalakleet River for the BLM.

He and three other BLM employees were taking a lunch break on a gravel bar. He figured by evening they'd finish collecting fish for their study on arctic char and grayling.

There are gravel bars on almost every bend of the northern reaches of the river. Camping is best on these gravel bars—the lack of vegetation means few mosquitoes. When the fish are running, however, the gravel bars can be littered with spawned out, decaying salmon. It was the stench of these decaying fish that drove Kelley and his crew to abandon their lunch spot in search of another.

As they floated away, a bear sow with her two cubs suddenly appeared, and with a roar she charged them. Coming within 20 yards of the dumbfounded group, she abruptly stopped, crossed the river, and

disappeared into the thicket with her cubs.

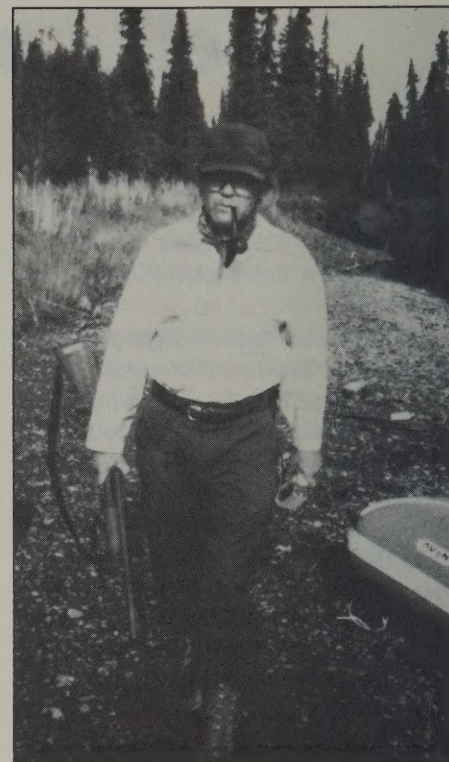
Although plentiful in the river corridor, bears seldom pose any serious threat if people stay alert and make plenty of noise while traveling. Kelley still shakes his head over the encounter.

Located in northwest Alaska, the winding river follows a southwesterly route for 2,000 miles before emptying into the Norton Sound at the village of Unalakleet. It was designated as a wild river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act because of its beauty and wealth of natural resources.

The BLM administers 80 miles of the Unalakleet River, from its headwaters about 105 miles inland in the Nulato Hills to the Chirokey River confluence. Smooth, rounded hills peek through the dense stands of white spruce, birch and balsam that line the river.

In early spring, anglers encounter a swollen Unalakleet with few fish. By June, the river has settled and the kings (chinook salmon) are running. In July, there's a large pink salmon run, while August and September are prime times to fish for silver salmon (coho).

Although fishing is excellent all



Natural resource specialist Dave Kelley says he never tires of the spectacular scenery of the Unalakleet River.

along the Unalakleet, it is more varied above the North Fork. Local residents and guided fishermen are the river's primary users. Sport and subsistence fishermen usually fish in the middle of the river. Commercial fishing isn't allowed on the Unalakleet, but is okay offshore near the river's mouth in Norton Sound.

Most sport fishing takes place between the confluences of the North and Chirokey Rivers, with anglers catching chinook and coho salmon. Char and arctic grayling are also taken in large numbers.

Travel to the upper reaches of the river above Old Woman is limited to helicopters and jet boats. Numerous sweepers and occasional log jams make river travel formidable, but the rewards are worth the trouble.

Fishing is "king" on the Unalakleet, but by no means is it the only reason for challenging the limited access to the river. "There's all kinds of wildlife," Kelley says. "If you're a photographer, hunter, canoeist or just curious, the Unalakleet River may be for you. Besides," he adds, "the fishing is always good, even when the fish aren't running!"

—Danielle Allen



Any employee who works in the field will tell you that it seems that more time is spent planning, and transporting supplies and equipment than doing the field work.

Prep school teacher volunteers for the wild life—and wildlife



Dan Gullikson

Teacher Vikki Wells digitizes wildlife information for the Steese/White Mountains District. Wells is preparing a unit on the state for her students in Rockford, Illinois.

Fifth-grade teacher Vikki Wells spent her summer vacation boning up on Alaska for her students this fall. Keith Country Day School, a private college preparatory school in Rockford, Illinois, gave Wells a grant to increase her knowledge of the world during her summer break. Wells used the grant to come to Alaska and volunteer four weeks of service to the BLM.

"I wanted to learn more and grow as a teacher without going back to school and paying tuition, so I volunteered to work at several agencies," Wells says. Winston Hobgood, wildlife biologist for the Steese/White Mountains District, learned of her goals and her interest in wildlife, and offered Wells a volunteer position.

"It has worked out really well," she says. "I'm preparing a slide show to supplement my report to the school this fall."

Wells' goal was to prepare a unit on Alaska—its animals, plants and people—for her students. She gathered books on Alaska, visited the University of Alaska Fairbanks Museum, and worked with BLM staff on educational materials and maps.

"I found a moose antler while on a field trip," Wells says. "I'll have the students reconstruct a life-size model of a moose and attach the antlers. Even picture books don't prepare people for their size."

In the office, Wells digitized Dall sheep locations for Hobgood and biologist Jim Herriges. Taking locations from coordinates on a map, Wells put the information into a digitizer, and cross-referenced in the computer

each animal's identification number and the flight number of each sighting.

Wells also accompanied the staff on a float trip down Beaver Creek to look for signs of bears. "I saw lots of tracks of bears, wolves and moose," she says. "Several cow moose with calves were along the river, as well as lots of mosquitoes. We planted grass on experimental plots at Nome Creek, 60 road miles northeast of Fairbanks."

Wells helped BLM wildlife biologist Ruth Gronquist with an early-morning survey of breeding birds—part of a nationwide survey coordinated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since 1965.

"Starting at 2 a.m., we stopped on Murphy Dome road every half mile to listen for three minutes. Ruth identified birds by sight and songs, while I recorded total numbers."

Wells fulfilled a dream by coming to Alaska. "I had my summers free which gave me a chance to volunteer my time and skills while I learned about wildlife," she says.

"My first impression of Alaska was the fresh, sweet smell of clean air, with a touch of spruce. I love the daylight up here; I never get tired," Wells says. She visited Mount McKinley, and took an airplane ride towards the Alaska Range searching for moose, sheep, caribou and bison. Wells also enjoys dog sled cart racing. "And glaciers," she says. "I've seen them in films, but that's nothing like seeing them for myself. They make me feel so tiny!"

Hobgood is a strong supporter of the BLM volunteer program. "It's a good deal for both of us. BLM staff gets help during the field season at minimal cost, and the volunteer gets to experience Alaska, see what BLM does, learn new skills and acquire references, and take back their information to friends, family and co-workers. In Vikki's case, she not only did a lot of good work for us, but she will teach her students about Alaska [and] about the role BLM plays in protecting and conserving...our environment," Hobgood says.

Hobgood would like to see the volunteer program strengthened in BLM. "There are some extremely competent people out there willing to provide services to BLM. By making their volunteer experiences more pleasant, we could attract other volunteers."

—Sharon Durgan Wilson

Campground hosts experience their own "Northern Exposure"

Summer visitors to the BLM's Paxson Campground this year experienced a situation uncommon in BLM's Alaska campgrounds—the presence of campground hosts. Bill and Jeri Cron have been living at the campground and volunteering for the BLM as campground hosts since early June, and will continue through early September.

Why become campground hosts in Alaska? Both had spent most of their lives in rural areas in the Midwest. Speaking of their home back in Illinois, Bill says, "It's out in the country, but you can see the 'Arch' in St. Louis from the driveway."

Back injuries meant Bill could no longer operate heavy machinery, so he found himself in an early retirement. Jeri's work in accounting had left her with little time off for years. Seizing the opportunity to make a change in their lives, they decided to do some traveling and got a recreational vehicle. On the move for most of the last year, Jeri feels that while they are living in the recreational vehicle, "home is wherever we are."

Bill, who is a fan of the television show, *Northern Exposure*, had two summer stints mining for gold in Nome and wanted to return with Jeri to see more of Alaska. Since crossing the border on April 29, the avid wildlife viewers have seen a fox, moose, otters and seals. On one memorable occasion they saw 27 eagles in one spot while clamming at Clam Gulch. "I'd really like to see



KJ Mushovic

Paxson Campground hosts Bill and Jeri Cron with their dog, Prince.

caribou," says Bill, "but I'd just as soon avoid an encounter with a bear."

During their travels, the Crons had stayed in hosted campgrounds and were familiar with the concept of campground hosts, although this is their first time in the role.

"The people have been great," exclaims Jeri. "I've talked with people from as far away as Sweden. Most people are glad to see us and don't mind paying the user fees. I think people from outside Alaska expect to pay. If they aren't happy about it (the change to a fee area), we try to explain how the fees go back into the campground to keep things up."

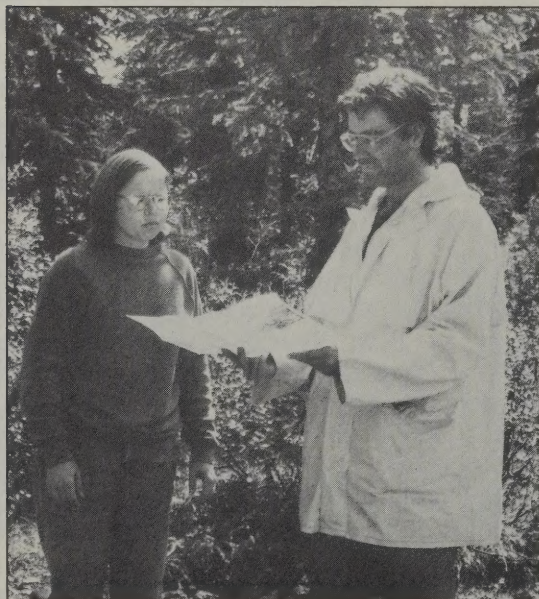
"Some people just aren't happy to see someone in a uniform coming around," Bill agrees. But many campers seek out the couple's campsite where the Crons have a ready supply of information, brochures and enthusiasm.

"We had 300 people here over the Fourth of July holiday," says Jeri. "It was a little sad when the place emptied out."

The Crons stay in touch with their family back in Illinois, and Jeri keeps an eye out for spoons to add to their three-year-old granddaughter's collection, but they don't plan to stay in Illinois for very long after their son's wedding this fall.

"We don't like doing nothing," says Jeri. "Maybe we'll go back and build a new house," Bill muses, "but there's still so much to see."

—KJ Mushovic



KJ Mushovic

Campground visitor Michael Cooper gets information from Jeri. Cooper, of Park City, Utah, was bicycling around the state.

Bladers and bikers roll along Iditarod Trail

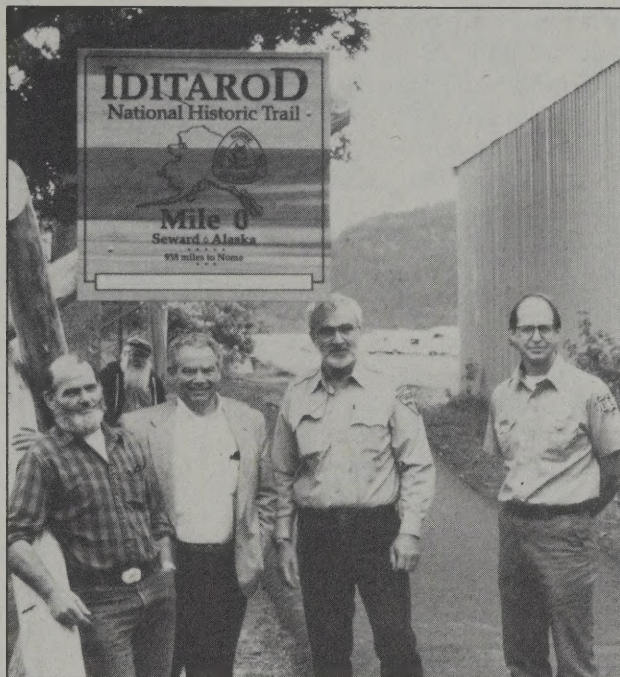
Rollerblading and biking on the Iditarod Trail? That's exactly what people were doing in Seward during National Trails Day on June 5, 1993. As one of many Trails Day activities, the Iditarod Trail Blazers promoted a walk from the harbor to the local high school. The group, along with the U.S. Forest Service, does most of the work on the trail in the Seward area.

The walk attracted a slew of local people who already know the first three miles of the Iditarod Trail is paved and is great for skating, biking or hiking. The rest of the trail is used mostly in the winter—boggy tundra and herds of mosquitos discourage summer use.

The 938-mile historic trail is administered by the BLM, and is cooperatively managed by the Bureau, the State of Alaska and other land managers.

As one of the summer projects to improve the trail, BLM Iditarod Trail coordinator Mike Zaidlicz and Trail advisory councilman Dan Seavey unveiled a sign in Seward marking mile 0 of the Iditarod National Historic Trail. Across the state on the beach in Nome, BLM Iditarod chairperson Leo Rasmussen and BLM Nome manager Norm Messenger also raised a sign at the trail's end. Rasmussen, an avid proponent of the trail says, "The sign is a real beauty. We'll take it down in the winter and put it in the Nome City Hall where it will be protected and further appreciated."

—Danielle Allen



Standing at Mile 0 of the Iditarod National Historic Trail in Seward are Dan Seavey of the Iditarod Trail Blazers; Seward city councilman Louis Bencardino; Dick Vernimen, BLM Anchorage District Office; and Duane Harp of the Forest Service. The signs at both ends of the Iditarod Trail were designed by Danielle Allen.

Clearing a path for the Fossil Creek Trail



Bureau of Land Management crews have widened and straightened 23 miles of the Fossil Creek Trail to make winter traveling safer for the public. The trail is only one segment of a 200-mile trail system in the million-acre White Mountains National Recreational Area, less than 50 miles from Fairbanks. The trail links the BLM's Borealis-LeFevre and Windy Gap public recreation cabins.

The original narrow, winding trail followed several creek beds and was considered by the Steese/White Mountains District to be the roughest trail in the area. Snow machiners and dog mushers found the trail

challenging in spots where temperature fluctuations and natural springs kept the water open or caused overflow and icing. Trail users will notice the improvement this

winter.

"The old trail was difficult to follow, even if you were familiar with it," says Randy Goodwin, outdoor recreation planner. "This 8-foot-wide swath through the woods is an obvious landmark that will keep people on track."

Travel on short winter days will be helped by orange, diamond-shaped reflectors attached to trees along the trail. As crosscountry skiers, dog mushers and snow machiners follow the trail in the dark, their headlamps will shine off the reflectors like tiny fireflies lighting their way through the forest. Trail signs with directions and distances will be installed at junctions.

District recreation crews spent about five weeks this summer cutting down trees to widen the trail. "We had received a few comments from dog mushers," says Goodwin. "The original trail was so narrow that both the dogs and the musher would bounce off trees as a team tried to turn around on the trail. They can now make wide, sweeping turns with less possibility of injuries."

The District plans to have inch-to-the-mile topographic maps with specific trail and cabin information printed by November.

—Sharon Durgan Wilson

frontier flashes

A pristine area of virgin timber and shoreline along Alaska's Prince William Sound is one step closer to protection now that 5,350 acres of land near Cordova has been conveyed to the Eyak Native Corporation. The conveyance means Eyak Native logging crews will be able to continue work without cutting trees in the shoreline area.

Logging crews were scheduled to begin cutting on land near the Orca Narrows, including areas of virgin old growth timber and critical resource habitat not affected by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.

The corporation had selected lands near Cordova as an alternate area for logging this year to keep their crews working, but could not log until the BLM transferred title.

BLM Alaska Fire Service manager Gene Schloemer announced his retirement effective October 1, 1993. Schloemer says he found his work challenging and interesting.

He says he will miss Alaska—and many BLM employees will miss him.

There is a new toll-free confidential phone number to the BLM in Alaska to report problems with the operation of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline (TAPS), including the oil terminal located at Valdez. The hot-line can be used to give information about possible environmental or related problems along the TAPS.

The phone number is one more step that Director Jim Baca is taking in BLM's more aggressive oversight of the pipeline.

BLM fisheries biologist Jeff Szarzi and a group of Glennallen High School students camped out overnight by a small lake for two days this summer to study pond and muskeg ecosystems. The students learned about pond water ecology and how to gather the data.

Szarzi explained what happens to lakes after "break-up" and the resulting phytoplankton bloom. The students were excited to see the diversity of invertebrates in the small lake, especially the abundance of fairy shrimp, and dragon fly and damselfly nymphs found in pond samples.

The Alaska Nature Conservancy lent three of its top Alaskan botanists to help the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists with the first-ever plant survey and collection on federal lands in Goodnews Bay, an area known for its unique geology.

Goodnews Bay possesses an unusual reversal tectonic continental plate overlap where the ocean floor plate overlaps the limestones. Heavily mineralized formations are exposed, which provide habitats for specialized plant communities.

Scientists gathered a wealth of new data about plant populations in Alaska, including many isolated plant populations and their habitats.

The Learning Channel's television series, *ARCHAEOLOGY*, will have a segment on the Mesa Site in Interior Alaska titled "Ice Age Crossings," to be aired on January 6, 1994.

A crew of four filmed BLM employees and volunteers this summer as they dug and sifted through soil at the Mesa Site looking for Paleoindian artifacts.



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